

MILTON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT FOR 1903.

GENTLEMEN,

I am presenting my report for 1903, and having now held the appointment during the whole year I have obtained a more thorough knowledge of the district and its chief characteristics, and shall be able to speak with greater accuracy on matters dealing with the public health than in my former report.

THE AREA OF DISTRICT.

This, excluding the area covered by water, amounts to 2,558 acres.

POPULATION.

The population estimated to middle of the year is 7,300. The number of inhabited houses at the census of 1901 being 1,422; this gives five persons as the average number per house.

DEATHS.

The total amounts to 135, against 162 of 1902; of these 84 occurred in Milton and 51 in the Union Workhouse, eleven only of the latter being Miltonians, and nearly three-fourths of the total were persons over the age of 65 years. It is a matter for congratulation that the number of deaths from violence, accidents, etc., is very small; one infant having died from wilful exposure, and an aged person from a neighbouring district died in the Union Infirmary as the result of burns from an oil lamp explosion. There were no suicides.

DEATH RATE.

The general death rate per 1,000 of estimated population was 18.5, and for the town alone 11.5; or including the deaths of Milton residents in the Workhouse 13.

INFANT MORTALITY.

The total number of deaths under one year was 27, giving a death rate per 1,000 births registered of 128.

BIRTHS.

The total number of births registered was 210 (males 104, females 106), giving a birth rate of 28 per 1,000.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The number of notifiable cases of infectious disease was only 23, against 42, 66, and 112 in the three preceding years. I consider that this most satisfactory state of things has been brought about (1) By the efficient working and carrying out of the Infectious Diseases Notification Act of 1889; (2) By the possession of such an excellent Isolation Hospital at Keycol Hill, which I have visited on several occasions, and can testify to the care bestowed on the patients and the up-to-date arrangements for their treatment and comfort; (3) By the prompt and thorough disinfection of bedrooms, clothing, etc., where cases have occurred, on being removed to hospital or at the termination of the illness if treated at home; that this has been done most effectively is shown by the fact that in only two cases did a second member of a family contract the disease; and these were due in the first case (scarlet fever) from contact before the illness was discovered, and in the other, where three members of a family contracted enteric fever, from drinking contaminated well water. Out of the 23 cases, 10 were treated at Keycol Hill; two had fatal terminations, one from enteric fever and the other from erysipelas in an aged person.

SCARLET FEVER.

Eight cases were reported, and six treated at Keycol Hill; no deaths occurred.

ENTERIC FEVER.

Six cases occurred in different parts of the district. The first, a very severe one, ended fatally; two were of a mild type, and the remaining three, members of one family, contracted the disease from drinking contaminated well water.

DIPHTHERIA.

Only two cases were notified and both made a satisfactory recovery.

ERYSIPELAS.

Seven persons contracted this complaint, one death occurring.

SMALL-POX.

No case of this disease fortunately occurred in Milton; as there was an outbreak in a neighbouring district great vigilance was exercised and precautionary measures taken to prevent importation.

MEASLES.

Only one death was caused by this complaint. No regular epidemic existed; only a few isolated cases coming under my notice.

WHOOPING COUGH.

The usual epidemics of this illness were observed during the year; only one case ended fatally.

PHTHISIS AND OTHER TUBERCULAR DISEASES.

Nine deaths were attributed to the different forms of tuberculosis. I regret to say that there are a number of cases in the district at the present time, and it is a serious question whether the sufferers and their relations are sufficiently impressed with the necessity for proper precautions and disinfection that should be taken in all dwellings where this dreadful disease is present.

INFLUENZA.

The usual epidemic occurred in the early part of the year; two deaths resulting in Milton and four in the Union Infirmary.

HOUSE ACCOMMODATION.

The housing of the working classes in this district appears satisfactory. There is sufficiency of open space about all the houses, especially those more recently built. A good number of new houses have been and are being erected under the supervision of your Surveyor, in order that the requisite air space, ventilation, and proper drainage should be arranged for.

SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE.

Practically all parts of the district are now connected with the drainage system. The condition of the sewers appears certainly to have improved, and owing to the larger rainfall they have been well flushed. House drains have been thoroughly inspected by your Surveyor, and in several cases repairs have been carried out at his instance.

EXCREMENT DISPOSAL.

The Septic Tank system is employed, and appears to give satisfaction. The removal and disposal of house refuse is carried out regularly by public scavenger.

WATER SUPPLY.

The district is supplied at present from the Waterworks at Keycol Hill. The service continues about twelve hours out of the twenty-four, and the water is perfectly wholesome; I consider it will be an immense benefit to the district when the Council's new Waterworks are completed, and a twenty-four hours' service maintained. I understand that the progress of the work and the quantity and quality of the water gives much satisfaction.

In a few parts of the district the water supplied to dwellings is still obtained from wells, and several of these have during the year undoubtedly been the cause of illness; one unfortunately causing an outbreak of enteric fever, and the water on being analysed was found to be much contaminated by sewage. This well was of course closed and the house connected with the public supply. In the lower part of the district adjoining the Creek the wells are at times certainly affected by the high tides, making the water unfit for drinking purposes without boiling and filtering. It is to be hoped that these will be closed during the coming year.

LODGING-HOUSES, SLAUGHTER HOUSES, DAIRIES, COWSHEDS, BAKEHOUSES, FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS, AND OFFENSIVE TRADES.

These places, over which the Council have supervision, have been systematically visited and inspected; improvements and repairs have with few exceptions been satisfactorily carried out, and it is hoped that the present state of cleanliness will be maintained, particularly as regards the cowsheds and dairies. Too much importance cannot be placed on the fact that they must be properly drained and ventilated, when the health of so many of the inhabitants depends on the purity and wholesomeness of the milk supplied to them.

NUISANCES.

Owing to the brickmaking industry and agriculture, large amounts of London refuse and manure are constantly being carted through the streets. At the beginning of the year numbers of the carts were not sufficiently provided with covers, with the result that quantities were shaken and blown from the carts, and at one time, in the space of two or three weeks, quite an epidemic of sore throats broke out among the inhabitants of those streets leading from the Quay to the outskirts. Representations were made to different manufacturers and contractors, and I am pleased to report that the nuisance has somewhat abated.

FACTORY AND WORKSHOP ACT, 1901.

Under Section 132 I am required to report on the administration of this Act in workshops and work-places in this district. All appear satisfactory in regard to cleanliness, air space, ventilation, drainage of floors where wet processes are carried on, and provision of suitable and sufficient sanitary conveniences. The special sanitary regulations for bakehouses are duly observed, and no underground ones exist in the district. Home work does not appear to be carried on in the district in any dwellings which are in any way injurious or dangerous to the health of the workers.

In conclusion, I must thank your Surveyor and Sanitary Inspector, Mr. Warlow, for his help in my inspections, etc., and for his promptness in carrying out the steps necessary for the prevention of the spread of infectious disease. It is to be hoped that the coming year will show no further increase in the number of infectious cases; and it is a matter for congratulation that the present one has been the lightest in this respect for many years.—I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

G. T. WILLAN, JUN.,
Medical Officer of Health.

Milton, February, 1904.

